



April 4, 2023

The Honorable Chris Holden
Chairman, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 5650
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 599 (Ward) Suspensions and expulsions: controlled substances: tobacco – Support as amended
March 28**

Dear Chairman Holden,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write in support of AB 599, which would revise school suspension and expulsion policies for drug-related infractions by requiring local education agencies, county offices of education, and public schools to create policies using a public health approach in lieu of suspensions and expulsions.

Under current law, school drug policies focus on a punitive approach when dealing with substance possession or intoxication on school campuses. This approach is detrimental to the overall success of students because suspensions and expulsions do not address the underlying need for support to prevent substance abuse among students. In addition, over 60% of drug-related suspensions and expulsions are of boys, over 80% are of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and 80% are youth of color.

While current law does offer some reprieve, by allowing for school districts to use community resources when responding to student substance use and possession issues, the Education Code is vague in this area and requires administrators to make significant treatment decisions for the affected student that many do not feel comfortable making. Additionally, many school districts do not currently recognize community-based treatment centers for student drug infractions, which leaves only punitive options for administrators.

By requiring school districts to create a public health framework for administrators assisting students with substance possession and use infractions, the administrators will have identified resources and the ability to make referral-based decisions for students. In addition, this allows administrators greater flexibility beyond using suspensions and expulsions as a response while addressing the health needs of students to reduce the likelihood of future substance abuse and addiction.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support AB 599.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yoder', is placed below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Paul Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Assemblymember Christopher Ward